

ELECTION LAWS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, now on an entirely different matter, a few months ago, a group of Democrats and leftwing activists brought the State of Georgia into the national spotlight. Tremendous outrage, an air of total crisis, was cooked up, cooked up out of nowhere.

The State of Georgia was passing a mainstream, commonsense election law. It combined widely popular integrity protections, protections like voter ID, with a great deal of flexibility and availability to make voting easy. It codified more flexible early voting and more flexible mail-in voting than many Democratic-run States offer—for example, New York.

Americans want to make it easier to vote and harder to cheat. Voter ID, for example, is popular with majorities of Black, White, and Hispanic Americans. But in their ongoing bid to mount a Washington DC takeover of our Nation's elections, Democrats seized on this mainstream law and decided to start shouting that the sky was falling down in Georgia—the sky is falling down in Georgia.

Unfortunately, for the people of Georgia, many people in the press and corporate America bought it. They got Major League Baseball to move its all-star game out of Georgia. Actual work opportunities, actual prosperity for working people, were sacrificed to serve this faked hysteria.

Well, today, Georgians got what you might call a very weak consolation prize. Today, a week after the all-star game was supposed to happen in Atlanta, Democrats themselves descended on the State to stage a bit of partisan theater. Last week, the traveling road show was Texas Democrats coming here to Washington to beg Senate Democrats to seize power away from their own citizens and local governments.

This week, it was our own colleagues' turn to get on the jets, but the rhetoric was just as hysterical and the conclusion all the same: Washington Democrats need to grab unprecedented power and rewrite all 50 States' election laws. It is the same shtick we have been hearing here in this Chamber for multiple years now.

Remember, their sweeping takeover bill was written long, long before any of the State laws which they now claim are prompting it. This phony outrage is wearing thin on the American people. Citizens know it isn't attacking democracy to have things like commonsense voter ID and commonsense voter list maintenance alongside lots of early voting, lots of mail-in voting, and lots of election-day voting.

That kind of combination isn't an attack on democracy; it is the definition of democracy. It is exactly what Americans want.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, in response to the minority leader's statement about the changes in voting laws across America, the record speaks for itself. I believe the number is 17—17 States which have set out to specifically limit previous opportunities under law to vote.

Is it a coincidence that 17 States would do these things? I don't think so. I think it is by design. That is why the Senate Rules Committee was in Georgia today, to talk specifically about the measures that they took after the last election.

Remember, this is all being done in the context of a former President, the sorest loser in the history of the United States, and his Big Lie about what was wrong with the last election. Well, I can tell you what was not wrong with the last election. In many States, the turnout broke records. More Americans eligible to vote turned up to vote, and that is a good thing in a democracy.

When it comes to allegations of fraud, all of the money that has been spent on lawsuits, all of the allegations of voter fraud that have been investigated, it turns out to be a handful of cases, maybe a dozen out of millions of votes cast in the United States. So there is no argument for changing election voting laws based on fraud. There certainly is no argument when it comes to the outcome of the election. That was clear, and it has been to everyone except one former President for a long time. Yet the Republicans, when in control of State legislatures, are by design trying to make it more difficult for some people to vote. Why? The answer is very simple: The demographics of America are not on the side of the Republican Party.

The new voters in this country are moving away from them, away from Donald Trump, away from their party creed that they preach. Instead, they are moving to be Independents or even vote on the other side. To argue and fight against that, the Republicans in legislative settings are reducing and restricting the opportunity to vote. That is what it is all about.

The Senator from Kentucky attributes it to hysteria. It is not. It is a genuine concern over whether in this country, where democracy is our creed and our goal in every election, we have the most participation, fair participation, by eligible voters that we have ever had, and we continue to build on that.

DREAM ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, on a separate issue, I cannot imagine what life would be like if I were a kid growing up in America, always wondering if something I said, something I did, some action that was taken by some member of my family would result in a knock on the door and my family being

torn apart, my father or mother being deported to another country. But for hundreds of thousands of young people living in America, that has been the reality of their childhood.

Most of them, brought to this country at a very early age—infants and toddlers and young people—had nothing to say about the choice of America as home, but they always assumed it was their home. They grew up in this country, went to the schools, got up every morning in the classroom and pledged allegiance to the flag, believing they were truly Americans. It wasn't, for many of them, until their teenage years that their parents sat down with them very quietly and solemnly told them: You have a challenge in your life you didn't even realize. You are undocumented. You were brought to this country by us as a little kid, and you don't have any papers. If you are challenged, if you are arrested, you could be deported. And the same thing might just happen to your mother or your father.

I can't imagine, with all of the stress of childhood and adolescence, having that worry as well. Yet, for hundreds of thousands of young people, through no fault of their own, that was part of their lives.

That came to my attention 20 years ago, a case in Chicago, which I have spoken about on the floor many times, where a young girl finally realized at the end of high school the really stark choices she had in her life, and she reached out to my office. We looked into the situation. She was brought here to the United States, born in Brazil to Korean parents, had no legal status in the United States and grew up here. She wanted to know what to do with her life, what was next for her.

The law was very harsh, but it was clear as well. At the age of 18, our law said to Tereza Lee, a young Korean girl in Chicago, you have to leave the United States for 10 years and petition to return. It didn't seem right or fair or just to her, and so I introduced the DREAM Act. That is when I came to realize Tereza's story was not unique. There were thousands just like her. Over the last 20 years, I have met a lot of them, an amazing group of young men and women who have done remarkable things with their lives with limited resources and always under the shadow of deportation.

The DREAM Act has been brought to the floor of the Senate five different times and failed—not because it didn't win a majority but because of the filibuster. So we have tried in those 20 years to get something done, and we have had our really troublesome moments. I think back to one of the worst.

Under the previous President, Donald Trump, DACA, a program created by President Obama for these Dreamers, was really an issue from the start that we begged President Trump to consider. President Obama, a friend of mine and former colleague from Illinois, told me that he spent an extra

hour in transition with President Trump in the White House, while Obama was still President. It was supposed to last an hour; it lasted 2 hours. He said to me: I spent that last hour talking about DACA and Dreamers, telling him how important it was to get this right, that these young people deserved a chance, and he listened very intently. President Obama said: "I hope that he will help you when it comes to these Dreamers."

The first time I ever met Donald Trump was on his Inauguration Day as President, not too far from here at a luncheon, and the first thing I said to him was, I hope you will give those Dreamers a chance to become part of America.

He said: Senator DURBIN, don't worry. I am going to take care of those Dreamers.

In the first year of his Presidency, he tried to abolish the DACA Program and subject these Dreamers to deportation. It was a very dark period. For many of them, they were despondent. Several of them said they couldn't take it anymore, the pressure they were under to create a life in America under the shadow of deportation and now have a President who was really determined to make them leave America.

Well, the courts took a look at what President Trump had to do, all the way up to the Supreme Court across the street. It was Chief Justice Roberts who wrote the decision, which said the method that Donald Trump's administration used to eliminate DACA was stricken as "arbitrary and capricious."

So there was a new lease on life and a new opportunity for them, until Friday—when the Federal judge in Texas made the most recent ruling. On Friday night, a Federal judge in Texas issued a ruling declaring that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, was unlawful, and the judge blocked the Biden administration from approving new DACA applications, a new setback for the Dreamers.

This decision was made in response to a lawsuit filed by Republican State attorneys general. It was the culmination of a long campaign, which included the action of President Trump, by Republicans to deport the Dreamers. What is it about these young people that infuriates the Republicans so much? Well, I will tell you what I found as I have come to know them. They are some of the most amazing stories you could imagine. Not just the threat that I mentioned earlier, the shadow of deportation over their lives, but what they have done anyway—becoming doctors and nurses and teachers and engineers, serving in our Army, working for America in essential jobs in the midst of a pandemic. It is an amazing group of people. It is just the kind of people we want and need for the future of this country.

But let me state this unequivocally: The cruel and misguided decision of this court will not stand. DACA is a lawful exercise of executive prosecu-

torial discretion by the Department of Homeland Security. More than 800,000 young people in our country have received DACA protection, and they help save lives every day as nurses and doctors and first responders. They contribute to our economy and our future as business owners, engineers, and teachers. They are a vital part of our communities as friends, family members, and loved ones. America is the only home these Dreamers have ever known, and Congress has waited long enough—in fact, it has waited too long to allow them to finally become American citizens.

Friday's ruling is yet another reminder of the hell that these young people have put up with over the past two decades. Under the Trump administration, Dreamers endured one attack after another.

When former President Trump attempted to repeal DACA, it put hundreds of thousands of young people at risk of being deported to countries they didn't even remember.

When the Supreme Court ruled that the former President's repeal of DACA was unlawful, he simply defied the Court's decision and stopped DACA applicants from being approved. For months, President Trump refused to reopen the program for new applicants despite the clear direction of the U.S. Supreme Court. Approximately 300,000 of these young people were unable to receive the protections they deserved because of President Trump's unilateral, hateful action.

In response to a court order, DACA was finally reopened for the new applicants in December, but now, just as the Biden administration is processing these applications, the door was shut again in the Federal court in Texas on Friday.

In the words of one Dreamer, Adonias Arevalo, "It's such an uncertainty, not to be able to plan my life."

Thankfully, President Biden has vowed to appeal this decision, but we need to prevent conservative judicial activists on the bench, politicians in black robes, from striking down the President's lawful efforts to protect Dreamers. Congress cannot wait any longer. America cannot wait any longer. Senate Democrats need to provide a permanent legislative solution for the Dreamers. We need to act swiftly.

I hope that my Republican colleagues with conscience will think long and hard about whether they are going to stand in the way of the Dreamers at this moment in history. We need their help, and not just some halfhearted symbolic attempt but genuinely to give these young people a fighting chance to make America a better nation.

To all the Dreamers out there, I promise you, we will work as hard as necessary to get this job done as quickly as possible.

NATIONALS PARK SHOOTING

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, on Saturday night, baseball fans at Nationals Park here in Washington, DC, not far from where we stand, were sent into a panic by a sound that has become all too familiar in American cities: the sound of gunfire.

In the middle of the sixth inning, the teams left the field when it was reported that three people were shot outside the stadium on South Capitol Street. That burst of gunfire reverberated throughout the stadium. It could be heard on television and radio broadcasts of the game. It was bad; it could have been worse. Thankfully, nobody inside the stadium was harmed, and many thanks to the first responders for keeping the attendees safe.

But the photos and videos from Saturday night tell a clear story. We are a nation that has become traumatized by gun violence.

The Fourth of July weekend, the city of Chicago, a city I dearly love and am honored to represent, there were 104 gunshot victims that weekend, 19 deaths.

We have come to accept, sadly, mass shooting as a possibility anywhere in America, at a baseball park, in a movie theater, in houses of worship, even in our schools.

Mass shootings happen on the streets of Chicago almost every weekend. Just this last weekend, more than 50 were shot in our city, including 7 children and teenagers. The sad reality is gun violence has become as American as baseball.

The question before this Senate again and again and again is, Will we do anything about it? Will we take minimum steps to reduce gun violence in America, steps like making it more difficult for convicted felons and unstable people to buy firearms?

Nearly every American supports that, and yet the gaps in the Federal gun laws continue. Right now, it is simply too easy for a convicted felon or person with a history of serious mental illness to buy a gun from an unlicensed dealer. A person—no questions asked—can easily buy a gun from an unlicensed seller just minutes away from the city of Chicago, in the State of Indiana, and that gun will be sold and resold many times over in our city of Chicago—many times the same day.

In March, the House passed H.R. 8, a bipartisan measure to close the gaps in our background checks system. Senator CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut and Senator MANCHIN of West Virginia have been leading negotiations to get bipartisan support for that bill in the Senate. I am waiting for their signal, and I hope to receive it—that we are ready to move on that legislation.

I hope Senate Republicans will join us in supporting this and other commonsense measures, like confirming a Director for the Agency that enforces the gun laws on the book—ATF—for the first time since 2015. Too many lives have been lost to gun violence in